

The First 72 Hours

The core moves for the window that decides everything — five fill-in worksheets and the field cards that go with them.

Inside this guide

- Why your mind is the first enemy
- Five fill-in worksheets
- Real field cards from the kit

A free starter from Systems Fail Lab. This is a sample — the full domain-by-domain system lives in the Intel Hub at systemsfaillab.com.

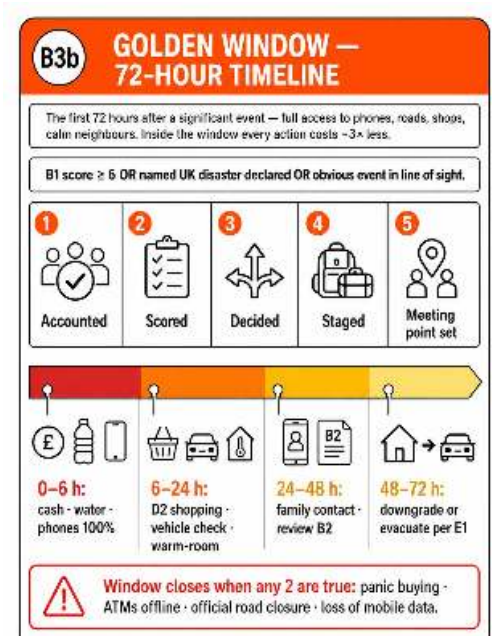
Your mind is the first enemy

When something major hits, the first 72 hours decide your options — and for those hours you rely on yourself. The rule behind everything: assume no outside help for three days.

The first obstacle is your own brain. Normalcy bias insists “this is temporary.” It is comforting and usually wrong at the worst moment. Most critical errors happen in the first 72 hours, through hesitation.

KEY PRINCIPLE Postponing the decision is itself a decision — usually the wrong one. Act while the window is open.

The first three days are four windows that close in sequence: **0-12 h** green (stores open, ATMs work); **12-36 h** yellow (queues, first conflicts); **36-72 h** red (shops closed, fuel gone); **72 h+** closed. The card below shows the moves for each.

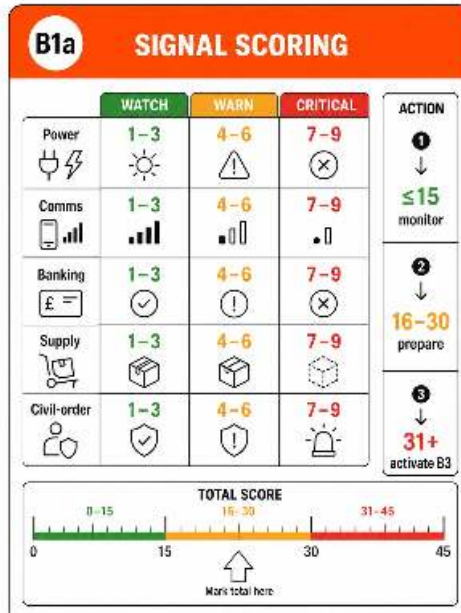


Field card — the Golden Window timeline.

Signal · Decide · Move · Pack

Worksheet 1 · Signal Scoring

Not all warnings need action; not all threats come with a warning. Score the signal; don't react to it. Three independent signals pointing the same way almost always justify action; one rarely does. Read the colour band, not the number.



Field card — score the situation across five domains.

Your go-to information sources — fill in now, not during an incident

Worksheet 2 · The STOP Protocol

Four steps, in fixed order, for the moment your pulse is up and your thinking is narrow — about five seconds for the first step, two minutes for the last.

A0
STOP PROTOCOL

The First 4 Steps of Any Emergency.

Use in the first 60 seconds of ANY emergency — fire, blast, crash, medical, attack, earthquake. Works on the brain, not the threat.

S		S — Stop physically — freeze in place. Do NOT run, call, or grab anything yet. Your first impulse is usually wrong.
T		T — 4-4-6 breathing: in 4, hold 4, out 6. Then name what you see: 'Smoke, Second floor, Door closed.'
O		O — Grounding: Where am I? What do I see? What do I hear? What do I feel. Then 300° scan: danger - injured - resources - exits.
P		P — One 1% improvement — the next 60 seconds, not the whole evacuation. Say it, then do it.

Why this works
 Hand shortcuts the thinking brain. A 10-second pause lets the prefrontal cortex re-engage.

Field card — Stop, Think, Observe, Plan.

Practice — what would you actually do at 3 a.m. to a fire alarm?

Worksheet 3 · Stay or Go?

Decide cold, not in a panic, across four things: is my shelter safe, do I have supplies, are my people able, is there a route out? If leaving will only get harder from here — go. Re-score every 12-24 hours.

B2a
STAY-OR-GO

<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> STAY </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Home structurally sound <input type="checkbox"/> Utilities functional <input type="checkbox"/> Roads OPEN <input type="checkbox"/> Supplies ≥7 days <input type="checkbox"/> Medical needs covered <input type="checkbox"/> No imminent secondary threat 	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> GO </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Threat advancing <input type="checkbox"/> Utilities failing <input type="checkbox"/> Official evac order <input type="checkbox"/> Roads PASSABLE outward <input type="checkbox"/> Destination confirmed <input type="checkbox"/> Vehicle fuelled
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More ticks RIGHT → GO. More LEFT → STAY. Tied → score B1 again. ➔

Field card — the Stay-or-Go decision.

Block	Score 1-5
Shelter safety	
Supplies (days in hand)	

People (all able to move?)	
Route out (destination, transport, roads)	

Worksheet 4 · The 15-Minute Evacuation

If the decision is go, move fast: assemble (≤ 30 min), pack only the critical, fill the car, pick a route (shortest + a back-road alternative), and depart at night or 4–6 a.m. The 5-km test: if you can't carry your bag 5 km at a brisk pace, it's too heavy.

B4
EVACUATION ROUTE

print TWO copies — glovebox + BOB

DESTINATIONS

Destination A (primary) — Address: _____ Contact: _____

Destination B (backup) — Address: _____ Contact: _____

ROUTES

Primary route — key roads/waypoints: _____ Fuel stop: _____

Backup route — via: _____

RALLY POINTS

Rally 1 (near home) _____

Rally 2 (outside area) _____

Out-of-area contact + number _____

P

A

C

E

PACE FRAMEWORK

Contingency (roads blocked) — via: _____

Emergency (on foot) — waypoints: _____

Nearest fuel on primary: _____

P = Primary ·
 A = Alternate ·
 C = Contingency ·
 E = Emergency.

Field card — Evacuation Route. Print two: glovebox and bag.

Destination	Primary route	Rally point	Out-of-area contact

Worksheet 5 · Bug-Out Bag

A grab bag is a mobility kit, not a hoard — target 8–12 kg. Its only job is to get you from here to somewhere safer. Pack weight low and close to your back; once packed, walk a block with it before you trust it.



Field card — bug-out-bag weight distribution and packing zones.






Item	Have?	Packed?
Water: 2 L + a filter		
Food: 3 days, no-cook, calorie-dense		
Warmth: bivvy, hat, one dry layer (sealed)		
Light & power: headtorch, spare batteries, power bank		
Documents: IDs/insurance on USB + printed		
First aid + personal medication		

Tear out, fold, and carry these

Real cards from the kit — the ones you want in your hand, not on a screen, when it matters most.

C2
WATER PURIFICATION

Make any water drinkable — in order of preference.
 Warm water can be safe one hour and contaminated the most. Filter visible debris first, then clarify, then purify. **Boil water — double the chlorine time.**

	1 BOIL	Boiling kill 2-1 min (5 min above 2,000 ft).	Bacteria - viruses - protozoa	Most tablets
	2 CHLORINE	2.3 drops/24 oz bottled. 16 drops/16 oz bottled. 15-30 min/50 min if cloudy, turbid or in shade.	Bacteria - viruses - protozoa	Poor against Cryptosporidium
	3 CHLORINE TABLETS	1 tablet per liter - 30 min per packet.	Bacteria - most viruses - most protozoa	
	4 FILTER	10-micron filter	Bacteria - protozoa	⚠️ Does NOT remove viruses, parasites, or chemical wastes
	5 SODIS solar	Clear PET 16 oz bottles 12 days double - lay on dark sand 2-4 hrs each	Bacteria - viruses	Fails

HARD RULES

- ✗ Never drink stagnant pond, seepage, or hot water, or chemical-wash water — purification cannot fix chemicals.
- ✗ Boiling does NOT remove lead, nitrates, pesticides. Find a different source.
- ✓ If the cloudy water through cloth or paper filter BEFORE a typhoid filter.
- ✓ Aerate boiled water by pouring between containers — reduce taste.
- ⚠️ Once mixed, water keeps drinkable for 60 hours in a clean sealed container, dark and cool.

Water Purification — make any water drinkable.

C3
REHYDRATION ORS



1 L
clean water

+



6 tsp
SUGAR

+



1/2 tsp
SALT



HOW MUCH ORS TO GIVE (ml per hour)

INFANT 0-12 months	CHILD 1-5 years	TEEN 6-17 years	ADULT 18+ years
 50-100 ml/hour	 100-200 ml/hour	 200-400 ml/hour	 400-800 ml/hour

GIVE ORS NOW

-  VOMIT
-  DIARRHOEA
-  SWEAT
-  FEVER

- ✗ Make fresh every 24 h.
- ✓ Use boiled-and-cooled water
- ✗ No ORS if confused or unconscious — 999.

Rehydration (ORS) — the formula that stops fatal dehydration.

C13 TOURNIQUET APPLICATION

Severe limb bleed — 2-5 min without it.
The new open CATS/COTTW procedure plus improved technique and the new classic errors.
Time of limb bleed still is 2-5 minutes; a correctly-bled tourniquet buys hours.

⚠ Arterial limb bleed: death in 2-5 minutes. Apply tourniquet without hesitation.

1		EXPOSE Remove or roll up clothing with care, or cut away if needed.
2		PLACE Place TO (not an open end) NEVER directly over a joint.
3		ROUTE Route the end through back, pull tight against bare skin.
4		TIGHTEN Tighten until you feel and find no pulse on any limb distal to it.
5		LOCK Lock with strap into security clip. Do NOT loosen for any reason.
6		NOTE TIME Write exact time on TO and CPR card's ventral side in red marker.
7		TELL All party members know time: 1 min each 2 hours; correct if possible.

Along the wound,
High and tight.
Never on a joint.

● GOOD APPLICATION PORTS
✗ NO — JOINT AREAS

TWO CLASSIC ERRORS

✗ The loop — must be 6-7 cm above wound, not at the wound.

✗ The loop — pins above a effective bleeding point — correct placement.

(NIPW) (NIPW) 25% or less (step 2-4) not needed; higher rate of success; better for all; other life — can mean save.

(C) Applied to: (documented) 25 min: (date) (time) (signature) (date)

Tourniquet Application — for severe limb bleeding.

E6 CPR + AED

Cardiac arrest — first 4 minutes decide.
33% with CPR, AED vs no prompt flow, possible resuscitation. Cardiac arrest survival time about 1% possible without CPR.

⚠ Call 999/112 FIRST. Put on speaker. Start CPR immediately.

1		Lay on firm floor. Tilt head back, lift chin. Check breathing (10 sec max).
2		Heel of hand on centre of chest (lower breastbone). Lock fingers. Arms straight.
3		Push DOWN 5-6 cm at 100-120/min. Staying Alive beat. 30 compressions.
4		2 rescue breaths (1 sec each). Compressions-only is acceptable if untrained.
5		Continue 30:2 until: AED ready - professional takes over - casualty breathes.

AED — SWITCH ON, FOLLOW VOICE.

Baric chest. Attach pads as shown. Do not stop CPR more than 10 seconds. **STAND CLEAR** when prompted. Do not touch patient during analysis or shock. Resume CPR immediately after shock — do not wait.

5 RESCUE BREATHS FIRST, THEN 30:2.
Compress 1/3 chest depth. Two fingers only for infants under 1 year.

100-120 / min — Staying Alive beat.

CPR — the first four minutes of cardiac arrest.

E9 HEAT + COLD EMERGENCIES

Heatstroke / Hypothermia / Frostbite — a short golden window each.
Each has a distinctive sign most people miss. Read the first line of each section in practice.

<p>❄ COLD — HYPOTHERMIA - CORE < 35°C</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Shivering - clumsy hands ● Slurred speech - stumbling ● Confusion - stiffness ● Shivering STOPS = danger ● Unconscious - pulse weak <p>1. ⚠ Shivering STOPS = danger. Confusion, slurred speech, stiff muscles.</p> <p>2. Remove wet clothing; insulate from GROUND first (25x faster heat loss than air).</p> <p>3. Warm CORE (chest/neck/groin) first — NOT hands/feet.</p> <p>4. Warm warm drinks if conscious. Share body heat in sleeping bag.</p> <p>5. Handle gently — cold heart prone to fibrillation from sudden movement.</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">FROSTBITE: White/gray numb skin. Reverse ONLY if no risk of re-freezing. Body heat — NOT hot water.</p>		<p>☀ HEAT — HEATSTROKE - CORE > 40°C — LIFE-THREATENING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sweating - weak - dizzy ● Cramping - headache ● Confusion + hot DRY skin ● No sweating - vomiting ● Seizures - collapse <p>1. ⚠ Confusion + hot DRY skin + no sweating = heatstroke. Cool NOW. Call 999.</p> <p>2. Move to shade. Remove excess clothing. Drench with cold water. Fan constantly.</p> <p>3. Ice to neck, armpits, groin (major blood vessels — fastest cooling).</p> <p>4. DO NOT give fluids if confused or unconscious.</p> <p>5. Heat exhaustion (precursor): sweating + weak + dizzy → cool, lie down, ORS fluids.</p>
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Heat + Cold Emergencies — recognise and treat each.

This is a free starter — a taste, not the whole system. Find your blind spots with the 3-minute Risk Calculator, and get the full field protocols in the Intel Hub at **systemsfaillab.com**.